



R.T.C. ATHLONE. Vol. iv, no. 2. Hilary term, 1985.

BULLETIN

Education Towards Employment

Dr. Fenton's graduation-day speech

Addressing distinguished guests, parents and students at the graduation ceremony at R.T.C., Athlone, on 2 November 1984, Dr. David Fenton, principal, spoke of the anxiety of young people about unemployment. He suggested several practical steps to improve their employment prospects.

He said that unemployment arose, not only because of the recession, but because automation is reducing the number of jobs in traditional industries. In Ireland the problem was compounded by the fact that we have a larger proportion of the population under twenty-five than any other country in Western Europe. Our future prosperity depended on our ability to harness the new high technology and make it work for us. A successful manufacturing sector might no longer contribute significantly to job growth, but it was the driving force for economic recovery: in the U.S.A., where unemployment had tumbled from 10.7% to 7.5% the vast majority of jobs created were in the service sector.

Dr. Fenton said it was now realised by all western countries that we must expand our efforts in education and training if we are to compete on equal



Photographed at the conferring ceremony at R.T.C., Athlone, were (left to right): Dr. David Fenton, college principal, Brigadier General Tadhg O'Neill, O.C. Western Command, Rt. Rev. Dr. Donald Caird, bishop of Meath and an t-Uas Padraic MacDiarmada, director, N.C.E.A.

terms with the U.S.A. and Japan. Furthermore, experience showed that even where there is high unemployment, well qualified people have a far greater chance of gaining employment. Investment in education by the government must be given priority status.

Other suggestions he made were en-

couragement of young people to initiate their own enterprises, the development of an incubation unit in the midlands where people could explore ideas and develop prototypes, and renewed emphasis on research in higher education, which had a job-creating potential.

Survey of Employment Patterns

A survey of the pattern of employment for the cohort of graduates of R.T.C., Athlone, who qualified in 1984-5 revealed that unemployment was encouragingly low. The survey was taken last November and reveal-

ed that of the 88% who responded, 46% had proceeded to further studies, 33% had gone to jobs and only 9% were unemployed. The summary of the survey is as follows:

	Business Studies	Science	Engineering	Total	%
Questionnaire sent out	197	56	98	351	
Response	170	55	87	312	88%
Further Studies	101	23	36	160	46%
Employed (Ire.)	43	26	32	101	29%
Abroad	11	—	6	17	4%
Unemployed	15	6	13	34	9%
Unknown					12%



Lionel Lyster, winner of the Principal's Award as the outstanding student of the year.

The French Connection

The college is at present organising an exchange system with the I.U.T. — Institut Universitaire de Technologie — in Rennes. Students from the School of Business Studies who have taken French as an option will visit Rennes for a week in the spring. While in Rennes, they will attend lectures in the college on subjects related to those studied at home. They will also visit factories and business premises in the area. Apart from the obvious linguistic benefit of such a visit, it is hoped that the students will get a good in-

sight into the daily life of their continental counterparts. Students from Rennes, accompanied by two lecturers in English, will pay a reciprocal visit to Athlone. Copies of the syllabus at present in operation in the School of Business Studies and Applied Management in Rennes will be supplied to staff members prior to the visit, so that those who wish to avail of the opportunity may be able to 'compare notes' with the French group on their arrival.



Rennes: the Palais du Parlement, with the towers of l'Abbaye de Saint-Georges in the background.

Marketing Award

The Bank of Ireland Marketing Award was won by Anne-Marie MacDermott. She also won the N.C.E.A. prize for academic achievement on the basis of her marks in the National Certificate in Business Studies examination in which she obtained a distinction. Included in the photograph with Anne-Marie are (left to right): Mr. Gerry Martin, Bank of Ireland, Athlone, Mr. Dan O'Sullivan, head of Department of Professional and Business Studies, Mr. Martin Crowe, Bank of Ireland, Athlone, and Mr. Eddie Cowan, regional general manager, Bank of Ireland.



Secretarial Prize



Mr. John Lyons, Midland Stationery, Portlaoise (left) presents an electronic typewriter to Catherine O'Malley, secretarial student of the year (right). In the centre is Mr. Dan O'Sullivan, head of Department of Professional and Business Studies. Catherine is currently employed by the Eastern Health Board at St. James's Hospital, Dublin.

Glennon Award



Anthony Barnicle (second from right) a student of construction studies at R.T.C., Athlone, is presented with the Glennon Award by Mr. Michael Glennon, building contractor, Moate (second from left). Also included are Dr. P. Mulhern, head of School of Engineering (left) and Mr. T. Power, head of Department of Building and Civil Engineering (right).

Regional Technical College Athlone Research Group

The School of Science Regional Technical College, Athlone, has recently obtained a substantial award from the National Board for Science and Technology (NBST) in support of work being undertaken on the development of methods of growth-promoter hormone testing in meat. Growth promoters are widely used in the Irish livestock industry to improve the efficiency of meat production. However, these agents must be correctly used, so that meat from treated animals is free from unacceptable residues and is safe for consumers. To ensure that effective safety standards are maintained, it is essential that meat should be tested both to detect any illegal use of banned growth promoters (such as stilbene substances) and to ensure the correct use of approved agents. During the course of this work, college staff have established close liaison with scientists in the Department of Agriculture Central Meat Control Station where related research work is in progress.

This R.T.C. project is sponsored by a NBST programme which jointly funds applied research and development to improve academic links with

the food and agricultural industries. Currently, this research is receiving industrial funding from the Irish Livestock and Meat Board (CBF), the Irish Meat Exporters Association and the Irish Domestic Meat Traders Association. Supporting facilities are

provided by the Westmeath Vocational Education Committee. Science staff in R.T.C., Athlone, engaged in the research programme are Dr. Con Hallahan and Ms. Yvonne McGarry (project leaders) and Ms. Jo. Duggan (research assistant).



Mr. John Brennan, Irish Domestic Meat Traders Association (left) presents a cheque in support of the research being conducted in the college to Dr. Cornelius Hallahan, lecturer in biology, School of Science.

G.A.A. Success



R.T.C., Athlone's senior football team were worthy winners of the Higher Education League's Division Three, 1983-4. They defeated Ulster Polytechnic in the final played at Santry in an historic victory for the college. The freshers' team also did well, reaching the final of the Freshers' League at Croke Park, where they were narrowly defeated by Sligo R.T.C.

Picture shows the senior football team before their final. Back row (left to right): J. Quigley, F. Whelehan, C. Hackett, P. Walshe, M. Flaherty, A. Scally, P.J. Brady, M. Drennan, L. Molloy; front row (left to right): Mr. T. Dunne (manager), M. Concar, B. Storey, B. McCabe, L. Corcoran (capt.), D. Regan, S. Hayes.

Technology and Scholarship in the Midlands Series

When the Regional Technical College, Athlone, opened in 1970, higher education in the Irish midlands may be said to have formally commenced. However, over the preceding centuries there were many who showed distinction in science, engineering, architecture, scholarship and the learned professions and who either originated in the midland area or spent a significant portion of their careers here. Collectively they laid the foundations of a tradition in technology and scholarship of which the college is in a certain sense the successor. The series which is continued here gives a brief appreciation of the careers of the more distinguished of this group.

9. *Joly, John (1857-1933), engineer, physicist and geologist.* Born at Hollywood, Co. Offaly, the youngest son of Rev. John Plunket Joly, he was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was appointed lecturer in

engineering in 1883 and professor of geology in 1887. He was gifted with an extremely original, versatile and inventive mind, and throughout his life maintained a constant flow of inventions and researches. His output included a meldometer, which determined the melting points of minerals and other substances, a hydrostatic balance to determine the specific gravity of small quantities of dense and porous bodies and a condensation method of calorimetry, by which he succeeded in determining by direct measurement the specific heats of gases at constant volume. He made some of the earliest determinations of the volume change of rocks upon fusion. The radio-active explanation of the occurrence and the action of thermal cycles in earth history was the outcome of his prolonged researches on the radio-activity of the constituents of the outer crust. In all, he published over 150 scientific papers.

Joly's range of interests was extraordinarily wide: he investigated the rise of sap in trees, was a pioneer of natural-colour photography and participated in marine research for the improvement of Irish fisheries. His enthusiasm as an amateur yachtsman led him to contribute on such subjects as floating breakwaters and synchronous signalling. During the 1914-18 war he submitted sixteen inventions to the British admiralty. At T.C.D. he was the inspiration behind the development of laboratories of physics, botany and geology. Joly was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society as early as 1892. He was president of the R.D.S. for a number of years, a commissioner of Irish Lights and, in 1905, president of the photographic convention of the United Kingdom. Before his death he was awarded honorary degrees by the universities of Cambridge and Michigan, and by the National University of Ireland.

Dr. Ambikairajah

Dr. Ambikairajah graduated from the University of Sri Lanka with a B.Sc. (Eng.) degree. Following graduation he worked as a research officer in Sri Lanka. In 1978 he was awarded a scholarship to Philips International Institute, Eindhoven, and obtained a post-graduate diploma in that year. In 1979 he was awarded a scholarship to pursue research in speech processing at the University of Keele, England. He graduated from Keele with a Ph.D. degree in 1982.

Dr. Ambikairajah joined the staff of R.T.C., Athlone, in April 1982 as lecturer in electronic engineering and



Dr. Ambikairajah.

computer technology. Since then he has participated in two seminars conducted by I.I.R.S. and AnCO. In 1983 he obtained a year's leave of absence to continue research at Queen's University, Belfast. During this time he was investigating the physiology of hearing and developed a practical technique for modelling the human cochlea. The results of this research were presented at the international conference of modelling & simulation (A.M.S.E.) Athens, 1984. He returned to Athlone in October 1984. His major research interests are in the applications of signal processing and microcomputers to problems in speech and hearing. He is a member of I.E.E.

Best Apprentice



Mr. Owen Stuart-Trainer, Allied Irish Banks, Athlone (left) with Peter Grehan, best apprentice (centre). On the right, Dr. P. Mulhern, head of School of Engineering.

Edited by Harman Murtagh
Printed by
Temple Printing Co. Ltd., Athlone